(e) the action taken or proposed to be taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Abu Salem has been issued passports from Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad and Monica Bedi has been issued passports from Bhopal, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

(b) Yes. Except for the passport issued to Monica Bedi from Regional Passport Office, Mumbai on June 24, 1999 in her real name, all other passports have been obtained by them under fictitious names.

(c) Yes.

(d) and (e) All the passports mentioned above have been revoked by the concerned passport offices. A case filed by Special Task Force (CBI) in connection with the issue of passports to Abu Salem from Regional Passport Office, Lucknow is pending trial in the court. Departmental proceedings were started against two officials of Regional Passport Office Lucknow regarding the issue of passport to Abu Salem from Regional Passport Office Lucknow. A case has been registered by CBI against Abu Salem, his wife and Monica Bedi in regard to the issue of passports to them from Regional Passport Office Hyderabad. Monica Bedi has been charged sheeted in regard to the issue of passport to her from Regional Passport Office Bhopal and a warrant of arrest issued against her by a court. Investigations by the police of the respective states are also underway in regard to the issue of passports to Abu Salem and Monica Bedi from Hyderabad and Bhopal. Three persons were arrested by the police in Andhra Pradesh in connection with the issuing of passport to Abu Salem from Hyderabad.

India's comments on recent missile test by Pakistan

279. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether, instead of making ironical statements to the media about the recent missile testing by Pakistan, Government have thought correct to strongly bring the issue to the international community and the US, that Pakistan has been constantly trying to destabilize South East Asia by its missile test programme;

(b) if so, to what extent his Ministry been able to put this point across to the international community; and

(c) if not, the reasons behind his Ministry's official giving such explanatory statements to the media about the Pakistani missile testing when they could actually build more pressure on Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) India has consistently shared its concern with the international community about deterioration in its security environment caused by Pakistan's acquisition of ballistic missiles and the clandestine linkages of Pakistan's missile programme. Recent ballistic missile tests by Pakistan were adversely commented upon by many countries. These tests may have been motivated *inter-alia* by domestic electoral compulsions.

(c) Does not arise.

Steps to stop attack on minorities

280. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report captioned "Centre not doing enough to stop attack on minorities: US Report" appearing in The Hindu dated 8th October, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps, if any, proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Yes. The State Department brings out a report annually on "International Religious Freedom", as mandated by the U.S. Congress.

(b) and (c) Government considers the U.S. State Department's 2002 Report on International Religious Freedom part of the internal process of a foreign government. Government rejects any intrusive exercise into how we conduct our affairs. The Constitution of India guarantees religious freedom to all its citizens reflecting the well-known social traditions in India of tolerance and respect for all religions.